

Praising God with Everything We Have

In my previous article, I began a new series from Psalm 150 which, like Psalms 146-149, begins and ends with the phrase “Praise the LORD.” We saw that we’re to praise the LORD everywhere. Along with this, we saw that we’re to praise the LORD *for who he is and what he’s done*. There’s never a time—and this will include throughout all eternity—that we could ever say that we’ve run out of things to praise God for. Let’s look further in this short psalm and we’ll see next that we’re to:

—Praise the LORD: *In the Fullness of our Hearts, Words, and Actions*

You’ll note that verses 3-5 give us a wide range of musical instruments that were used in different Old Testament celebrations as well as the corporate worship of God. We can see categories of wind, string, and percussion instruments. These musical instruments were often used, as one writer has noted, “to promote and amplify the praise of voice and heart.” We know that there was worship and celebration—some *inside* the temple and some *outside* the temple—that took place often in the life of Old Testament Israel. We also know that in this worship and celebration a variety of musical instruments were played and sometimes there was dancing. Dancing in scripture is often used as a *metaphor* for joyful worship rather than literal dancing (e.g., Ps. 30:11). When we add “dance” to all these types of musical instruments what we have *metaphorically* is joyful worship *in the fullness of our hearts, words and actions*.

What we’re seeing in verses 3-5 is the “*how*” of worship. Old Testament scholar Derek Kidner has written these helpful words: “The answer to the question of ‘how’ is: ‘with everything that you have!’” Although it’s true that we worship God *literally* with hearts, words, and actions, including the use of our voices and musical accompaniment, it’s also faithful to scripture to unpack these verses *figuratively* and therefore we can speak of worshipping joyfully all our lives “with everything we have.” We worship God because of who his is and what he’s done, *and* we worship him with all our being. Our *joyful worship* of God can never be dependent upon whether or not everything in our lives is going according to the ways that we would want it to go. I want to illustrate this truth with one story from the life of a very important Reformed theologian.

Benjamin B. Warfield was a world-renowned theologian and scholar who was a professor at Princeton Seminary for nearly 34 years until his death on February 16, 1921. He was known for his desire to uphold the truths of Holy Scripture as well as his amazing intellect. He was called by some, “the lion of Princeton.” In 1876, at the age of 25, Warfield married Annie Pierce Kinkead and yet, many people don’t know the tragedy that befell this young couple. Shortly after their marriage, they went to Germany on their honeymoon. During a terrible thunderstorm Annie was struck by lightning and permanently paralyzed. Because of the extraordinary care that she required, Warfield seldom left his home for more than two hours at a time during all those years of marriage. After caring for Annie for 39 years, Warfield laid her to rest in 1915.

There would be much to commend in such a man who was devoted, not only to his wife, but to

his Lord. During all this time of struggle, he might have easily become embittered, and yet, his desire and his passion was to use his gifts to serve God in training men for pastoral ministry and he spent the bulk of his adult life faithful to that task. And even though he was faithful in serving his wife; even though he was faithful to fulfill the work of serving the church and seminary by training pastors; he saw all too clearly that God is the One who is truly faithful. God is the One who brings all things into our lives for our good and for His glory, and God is to be worshiped no matter what comes. Because of God's work in his own life, there came a time when Warfield wrote his thoughts down on Paul's magnificent verse to Christians that we know as Romans 8:28. "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." In commenting on that verse Warfield wrote the following profound words which have benefitted many:

"The fundamental thought is the universal government of God. All that comes to you is under His controlling hand. The secondary thought is the favor of God to those who love him. If He governs all, then nothing but good can befall those to whom He would do good [.....] Though we are too weak to help ourselves and too blind to ask for what we need, and can only groan in unformed longings, He is the author in us of these very longings [.....] and He will so govern all things that we shall reap only good from all that befalls us."

This illustration from the life of B.B. Warfield, as well as his teaching on Romans 8:28, shows us that—no matter what struggles and trials we face in life—with our hearts, words and actions, we're called to worship God *all the time*; we're to worship God with our time, talents and treasures; that is to say, we're to worship God with everything that we are, with every opportunity we have, every day of our lives. The apostle Paul shows the interrelationship between corporate worship in the sanctuary with all of life worship that flows out of corporate worship in Colossians 3:16-17. He writes, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

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